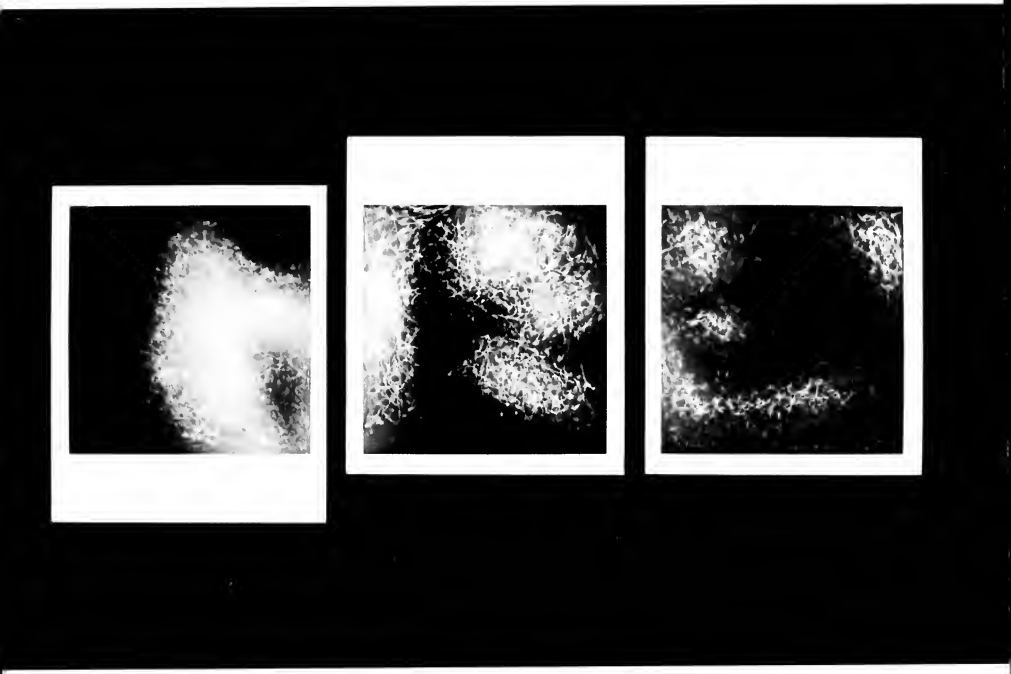

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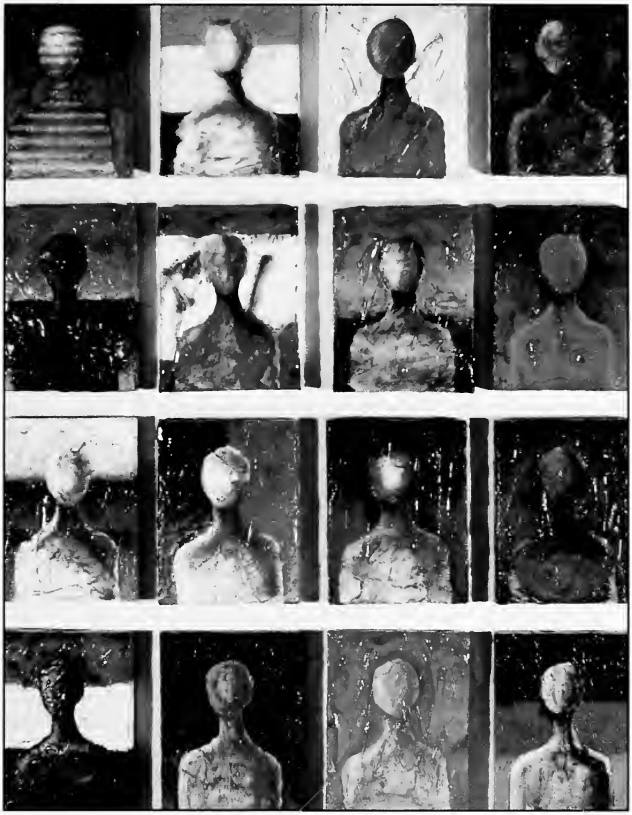

Acceptance Without Reservations, Chris Screws

quad

The Literary and Arts Magazine of Birmingham-Southern College

2001

QUAD 2001
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EDITOR:	Lauren Terry
PROSE EDITOR:	Valerie Whitfield
POETRY EDITOR:	Emily Self
ART EDITOR:	Chris Screws
LAYOUT EDITOR:	McCharen Pratt
FACULTY ADVISOR:	Dr. Peter Donahue

Front Cover Art: *Experiment in SX-70*, Rumsey Taylor
Back Cover Art: *Untitled*, Wes Frazer

Birmingham-Southern College, 900 Arkadelphia Road, Birmingham, AL 35354

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Fluid Dynamics

Allison Lee

Outside, the moon sticks out like a large
silver Susan B. lying on black asphalt. Crowds
line the steps, flowing against the doors and puddling
against the entrance, awaiting access to the show.

Our eyes meet—a look of resplendent shock
waves across your face. I'm not supposed to be here.
We exchange transonic smiles and eager introductions
while the mellifluous mass surges into the venue.

Inside the auditorium, darkness settles. Shear
layers of light illuminate the stage, exuding a sonic
vortex, bursting with energy that threatens
turbulence—a frisson of folk rock.

In our row of unmutual friends we sit side by side,
close but not touching— still there is skin friction,
the instantaneous resultant of too much time
together. An amalgamous pair.

Along with the harmony flowing from the stage comes
freestreams of comfort and cadence. We sing along.
For a little while we are dynamic, fluid, enjoying familiar
faces playing favorite tunes—for a little while we run together.

Galaga (Love in an '80s Arcade)

Jerry Hinnen

Each day fifty-seven thousand people pass
a Manhattan restaurant's window aquarium, their shoulders
colliding, toes tread upon. They ignore
the lobsters-for-sale clambering
over their own disjointed bodies, jagged feet
jabbing the others' eyes, their rubber-bound claws
clattering against the half-inch of glass.

Yet the guts of the passers-by acknowledge
no proximity, no jostling, no suffocation. They'd admit,
over beer or sitting cross-legged under an afghan,
that the building a block down with thin
lighting and square machines that spit
quarters in exchange for dollar bills harbors an image
more like their self-image: a single-passenger spaceship
sojourning through the farthest-flung reaches
of the void, joined by two things only:

Shapeless, indistinct stars that never rise
from their video screen background to warm them;
a host of locusts, insectile marauders
bearing scarlet antennae, lime mandibles.
Dark blue blood pulses in their translucent wings.
The hordes descend in mad droves to ask for

your current balance of six-hundred twenty-four dollars
and sixty-eight cents, which is now two months past due.

The goddamned Bingham report, where is it? You said
it'd be on my desk by five, Henson!

just one phone call for your mother
every once in a while, child. It couldn't hurt.

Anybody can pick off a battalion or two of these demons
alone, but hacking a clear pathway
through the abyss, the earning of peace
amongst the invaders requires a second gunner,
ships docked tight alongside each other, lasers blazing,

to blast away in tandem any success for the kamikaze
breakneck gnats of this modern life.

Gaining a twin fighter requires sacrifice—
no longer firing nonstop at anything
that twitches; remaining alert for the opportunity,
the soft blue tractor beam
from something odd, beautiful, not seen
at close range before; letting the beam take hold.
Allowing capture remains the sole method of winning
the security and firepower of a partner ship.

Venice

McCharen Pratt

Canals
dressed in nothing
but late autumn starlight
brush up against buildings and wink,
smile, slip

away.
Watching alone,
a lover leans over
the dirty rail of a cold marble
bridge, arms

crossed, hands in elbows,
ankles crossed, back curved sharp as
a gondola keel.

Sighing
in sympathy
with those molded stone banks
standing cold in passing waters
that tease,

he shoves
off the rail, tramps
down to the square below.
Closed in by cigar shops and blind
statues,

he draws broken
hearts on clouded store windows
whistles arias—

"*l'amour*
est un oisseau
rebelle"—and curses his
own rebellious bird who dances,
swaying

hips, head
thrown back, pursed lips
almost smiling, pressing
close to a body, never his,
laughing.

Unfamiliar, Tony Yu

Observations on Legal Pad Paper

Will Moore

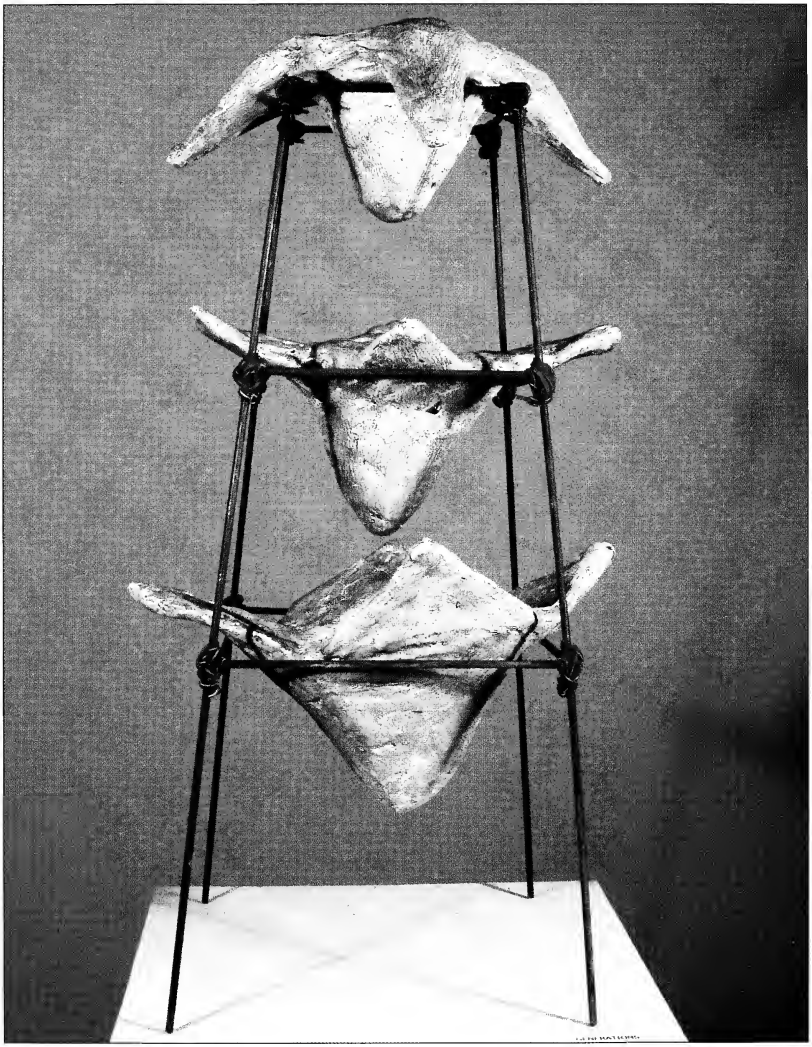
I'm looking out the window
at *Firenze*, or El Dorado
as I have deemed it.
I have not yet mastered
the language, though in four
days you absorb a lot of it.
I've absorbed many things.

It's a golden city through
and through—the buildings,
the sunlit river,
the wine, the jewelry.
It all makes you feel rich
as though you are part
of an enormous treasury,
or covered by a brilliant
golden fleece. You breathe gold.

And the Florentines have become
so gripped by the city's opulence
that it radiates from them.
Their long black hair brushes
the tops of their black wool coats
that shine the tops
of their patent leather lugs.
They fit into this dazzling scene
like saints in a Renaissance painting.

But when you yourself become
golden is late at night,
strutting through the narrow,
unlit streets that trickle through
the buildings like streams
breaking off of a river,
and you look up at the stars,
take a deep breath, and follow
the cobblestones to
the next piazza where

a fountain emerges, out of place
anywhere but at this very spot.
You take out a brazen fifty lire,
rub it on your pants and between
your fingertips, toss it into
the splashing water, illuminated
by the gold of a full moon,
and realize you have little
to wish for.



Generations, Nicole Miller

Once by the Pacific

Based on the poem by Robert Frost

Mary Kate McCormack

I walked carefully down the narrow, uneven path of sand, taking hold of a branch or bush now and then to steady myself. I stepped carefully, although I'd walked the sandy path between the brush several times before. Black clouds had taken the moon captive, and rendered her unconscious. I felt a contented thrill at stepping down the familiar, hidden path. A few steps more, and the crescent shaped beach lay before me. Stretching for less than a hundred yards, the beach backed up to a high cliff of noble slate that seemed to say, "I am capable of protecting my beach. Better to treat her with respect." Perhaps it was for this reason that the beach possessed an innate sacredness, a sacredness I'd realized and acknowledged deep into the far reaches of my memory. Full of emotion, the beach always listened to the heart, answering silently.

I removed my shoes, letting my feet slide through the cool sand, and released a deep breath. I closed my eyes, letting the wind lift the hair from my forehead. The air blew

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I failed to recognize an emptiness behind his eyes, or maybe the emptiness appeared when I was not looking.

---

across the ocean and attached itself to my body, filling the missing pieces. As though it moved with a planned purpose and strength, the light moist wind soothed my inflamed soul. The beach had often been the provider of a soothing breeze, a place to soak in the familiar saltiness of my tears. Overwhelmed with the wonder of the darkness of the night, I opened my mouth slightly, as though to breathe in its magic.

Brisk, salty drops of ocean spray hit my face suddenly, and I opened my eyes. Sharply drawing in my breath, I realized the ferocity of the ominously rising waves before me. My eyes surveyed the scene, far out to the horizon. As the darkness from above crowded closely down on the water, the waves churned higher. Rising and swelling, water tumbled over water in a tumultuous collection of premeditating movement. The wind grew strength at every turn, pushing the water farther as it pounded the shore with increasing force. My feet shifted nervously in the sand as the crashing surf crept closer to my feet.

As a child on the beach with my father, I never witnessed or imagined such a scene of raw and angry force. Since before I could remember, Dad brought me to the beach and carried me safely through the waves in his arms. He taught me to pull through the cur-3 rents with my arms while using my feet to propel my way through the waves. Dad acted as mother and father to me, since Mom passed away soon after I came into the world. He

told me stories about her as we picnicked on the beach on late afternoons. When Dad got sick, I came to the beach to let my tears fall into the sand. I swam slowly through the water, like visiting a graveside.

Dad couldn't visit the beach with me anymore, and it became a place to remember, not to make memories. Sometimes the welcoming splash of the breaking waves provoked a loneliness that made my eyes sting with tears. Such loss, such pain, I could never again endure. Marriage filled a measure of loneliness, and helped to ease the pain; I found love, and we promised to care for each other, like the breeze. I failed to recognize an emptiness behind his eyes, or maybe the emptiness appeared when I was not looking. He came home to a dark stillness, leaving cold kisses on my cheek. After peering down at me with icy blue eyes, he slid into bed beside me with an empty touch. I knew that my love had found love somewhere else. For a while, I searched and dug for love in the shell of my former friend, partner, and husband. To let my husband know of my knowledge seemed useless, as useless as drying the sea with a hand towel. While betrayed, to rock the boat could leave me drowning.

The night grew blacker as the waves churned with an acidic rumble. My thoughts drifted to the woman, in my bed, no doubt, with the wife out of town. Anger swelled up in my heart. With each wave that hit the shore, I grew more incensed. The crashing of the waves grew to a roar, and the thunder raised its voice, calling the storm to prepare for action. Streaks of lightning branched across the sky. The bubbling surf rushed up the shore, and my ears filled with the sounds of the ocean. Soon the gathering storm would unleash its rage with full force. Heavy drops of rain began to fall into the water.

So vast, the sea could conceal a world of secrets. A treasure chest full of my memories and my tears, the sea would keep them hushed within the "ssssssshhhhhh" of the waves. I could return here, could conceal any evidence and the sea would never tell. She never had failed me. The vast ocean bottom would cradle a gun, perhaps, into its world of mystery. The rain fell faster and harder, and I turned for the path from the beach. Surely, the rain marked only the beginning of the storm's wrath, and a rage promising to leave its mark.

In Velvet

Emily Self

I've gained my new antlers this year,
and I rub against the hard places,
wearing away the soft outer skin
to refine and sharpen
this hard earned new pair—strangely
proud of my latest spike.

Hunters search for sign of these rubs
to learn their quarry's habits.
But I leave few signs
from what I've learned,
save the scar on my right elbow
and the dent in my bedroom wall.

There's a slight itch on my head
where the antlers push through,
like a newly healed scab
I can't wait to scratch off.
But I'll bear it, no question,
if that's the exchange for abuse.

Who knows if I'll shed these antlers
as well, for a pair less hardened
or cautious. All that matters,
for now, is the old ones are gone,
to be gnawed at by rabbits and squirrels—
the nagging pangs of should-have-known-better.

Deer shed their antlers each spring.
The new pair grows with a point for each fall.
First jelly, in velvet, then hardened
and scraped away to expose
dried blood vessels, protein,
stark white in comparison.

Untitled, Ron Sway

Her Room

Lacy Harrell

A map of Europe sits in the corner,
where she has thumbtacked the places she has been:
Brussels
Madrid
Paris
Orvieto

And the cashmere blanket on the bed smells like February,
the month she said she would write the book, and started it,
but never finished.

Her favorite set of Canada Dry playing cards are neatly stacked,
the edges bent from shuffling:
Aces
Hearts
Queens
Jacks

And the clock on the wall is seven minutes slow,
and the bird that sings at the hour is missing an eye,
but is stopped singing years ago.

On the dressing table sits her earrings, the ones he gave her in the red box,
with the blue ribbon on their last Christmas together:
Ruby
Onyx
Pearl
Gold

And the housefly buzzes around the nightstand,
where the bottle sits of the pills she ate so slowly,
one by one, till she could not count anymore.

Roadtrip to Woodstock

Mandy Bradley

My Siberian stepmother and I drive through Woodstock
old flower children new socialites discuss the stock
market and getting drunk off champagne at
that trendy beatnik lounge, rhinestone
leashes on little dogs with painted
nails we're cautious not touching
the overpriced antiques,
soulless tie-dyes

for the background of our black-and-whites shirtless
boys who wear imported woven hats and wrinkled
sandals with their tattoos, carry red Fruitopia
and backpacks, hand us pamplets and we
sit with dripping ice cream cones as
they lecture, exhale thickly and
flick cigarettes onto
the sidewalk

but as we ramble
further, Celtic music on the
local station sharing the road with a
Volkswagon bus kayak on top, I drive
and pass rusty geometric sculptures in front
yards, drinking a canned Coca-cola Classic toast to the
rough handhewn bridges and curvy psychic welcome signs.

All the film
is spent before
we stop and see
the lavender house
with birds painted on—
purple seagulls in swift flight
the Victorian porch with blue vines
longhaired dog on the very top step and
a broad, turning band of yellow wildflowers
where a driveway should be washed green bicycles
instead of a jeep, I want to live here and be happy if only
to watch the three deer in the flowerbed from the kitchen window.

Courage, Jessica Callow

To Galatea

Mary Lou Butts

My clothes, my makeup, my shoes go. My sherbert green tank top, the one with strands of amethyst and sapphire plastic beads for straps. My black knit skirt skirts the top of your shins, although on me it just touches the ample arches of my kneecaps. My minty makeup, brushed into the creases of your eyelids, blended into the white just under the eyebrow. Not slathered, just dabbed for "subtlety." I have nothing more subtle than that, but I would give it to you if I did.

Your silver hair clip, the one I deem a little tarnished, but you vow to wear it just the same. Besides, I would have none to give you. While your bronzed chocolate hair glances off your shoulders, my *Sunset Tide* no. 31 red spikes poke out into two inches of gel wires. You ask me to help. You know he likes it when you don your hair up, with those wisps "accidentally" coming loose when you turn, like the girl from the Pantene commercial. I pull the static free brush through your hair. The round, globular bulbs from the vanity, too bright and too tinted, cast a wan blonde glow on the two of us. "Jaundice."

However, it picks up the topaz sheen in your hair as I sculpt the slight frizz of curl your hair takes on when not blown dry. Twist, pin, twist, pin, twist, pin, tuck, clip. As I admire the product, the final image of you wrapped, glossed, and covered in me, I imagine his inevitable undoing of my work: unclip, pull, uncoil unpin, uncoil, unpin, uncoil. Thick clumps of amber chunk around your face. In floppy curls, still wet and slick from being pinned up after your shower. I insert a couple of extraneous pins.

I imagine his inevitable undoing of all my work, smearing the painted lipstick and green, stripping away the coats of clothes, the un-molding of your hair. Restoration of the blank canvas. The highest form of admiration.

In the Bargello—Vexed

Will Moore

David stands mockingly
on the pedestal, reflecting
the soft museum lights
off his dark bronze torso.

In his left hand, a sword,
too heavy to lift.
In his right, a stone—the weapon
that made him king.

One foot rests on the giant's head
while his weight shifts to the other,
his hip jutting out like an axe-blade,
like a woman, a seductress.

He poses sensuously for viewers,
with his pretty face, soft belly, curvy pelvis.
He is delicate and graceful
with the slyness of a bad wife.

His lips turn upward in a smirk,
his eyes cast downward at his trophy—
not humble, not proud, but sarcastic
as though amused by the Philistine's ignorance.

I ask you, Donatello, did you intend
to fashion androgyny or femininity?
Were you the first male
female activist?

Were you hailing the womanness
in men, proclaiming that sensitivity
can be as heroic
as mannish strength?

Were you simply rejecting
the artistic norm of the humble athlete,

by casting a sheepish, innocent, boyish
herder, soft and meek?

Or did you want critics
for centuries to come
to sit with furrowed brows
pondering the duality

and profound complexity
of your creation,
a cocky shepherd boy
with a smirk on his face,

as though giggling
at the bewilderment
in the faces of critics
baffled by a piece of bronze?

First Grade, First Kiss

Natalie Hummel

Left alone with the neighbor
boy on an afternoon in August—
warm sun versus cool breeze—
we shift from shade to sunshine
tampering with our temperatures

The woods sang a siren's song
for Bo, who took me from my house
Bradford Pear trees hung low
delivering bouquets of blooms
within my grasp.
Bo didn't seem to notice.
He was only twelve-years-old.

The particulars of initiating talk
remain unclear to this day
I do recall the damp ground, rebelling
amongst his sun-dried brethren.
And I will never forget
the feel of virgin lips on virgin lips.

Five times I tingled, and on the last
a warm slippery mass
slid through my teeth.
I lunged back and laughed in my bouquet.
My perturbed partner rose and grabbed
my wrist, running back to my house.
He was smiling to himself by the time
we ate ice cream.

The Reverse Apotheosis of Haruo Nakajima

George Royer

I can scarcely imagine how you, sir,
must have felt when you hovered over
Tokyo. You were the peerless
Shogun of plastic peoples,
cardboard buildings, and diminutive
automobiles.

I can only attempt to envision the glazed eyes
and amorous stares of the Japanese children
as they beheld your rubbery majesty. I wish that I
had seen their mouths agape as your
incandescent bellow lit up the night
like an atom-powered angel. I would
liked to have been there when
you shook the Shinjuku Prefecture
with your magnanimous presence.

It lately occurred to me that by now you
are probably very old. I understand
that many of the children whom
you once held in your savage thrall
now have children of their own.
With the gamut of modern responsibilities or
the abandon of one night stands, these
former devotees have more important things
to do than watch your
serrated back emerge from an iceberg
at a nuclear test site.

I hear that the studio let you go,
that people don't like stories about
monsters these days. I suppose
that they auctioned away your second skin
to a purveyor of tasteful novelties.
I would just like you to know that as
the tidy little children scurry past
your tidy little home, it is my sincere hope that they

will nudge one another playfully and
point to the third house on the left and
whisper that one can sometimes
catch sight of the old man who used
to be Godzilla as he
mows the lawn.

The Last Cookie

Jerry Hinnen

Two chocolate-chip cookies remained in the Tupperware cookie jar, the one Great Aunt Doris had shipped overnight two weeks after the bridal shower. He ate the larger of the two and offered her the jar.

"You want the last one?" he asked. Cookie particles slipped over his lips to the floor.

"No thanks," she said.

He took the cookie out, brushed the crumbs off it, and swallowed the remainder of his. "You sure? All yours if you want it."

"Not unless you don't," she said.

"If you want it, then I don't."

"Up to you. Eat it, don't eat it, whatever."

He said, "I don't guess I'll eat it, then," and put it back inside the container.

"Wait," she said, "You really don't want it? OK, I'll eat it." He opened the jar back up and handed her the cookie. She turned back to the Cosmo she had spread across the kitchen table and bit half of it off, crumbs falling into the magazine's crease and settling in-between her crossed legs. She did not wipe them away before turning the page.

He went into the living room, where he listened to her crunch through the other half. After her second bite he punched the wall, his index knuckle leaving a quarter-sized hole in the cheap woodgrain paneling.

"What the hell was that?" she asked entering the room, and seeing the hole.

"There was a bug," he said.

"A bug?"

"Yes, a black one. A bug."

"Hope you got him," she said. He looked away from her, brushed something invisible from the back of his neck. Her eyes watched his watch nothing for a long moment. She looked at the hole, hoping an ant would crawl out. None did, so she said "Well, I'd better fetch the duct tape," and left the room.

He ran his finger around the hole's rough and fibrous edge, and pulled free a chunk of paneling splinters. "Better hurry," he called after her, "before it gets any bigger."

No Fists, Corbin Street and Carey Martin

Feet

Mandy Bradley

My eight-year-old cousin licks feet;
he licks the bottoms of his own shoes, it's rather
disconcerting, I am eating a polite supper,
conversing about the Taj Mahal or World War II
and then Darren is under the table trying to lick my feet.
His mom rails, but it's really up to everyone to defend
themselves, wear socks at all times and so forth, but
really this summer was all about feet. My feet
still bear the blights of my entanglements,
Obsessions. I have a weakness for spindly,
ill-fitting and disfiguring shoes, "Barbie Shoes."
To New York City I brought only
these and Dr. Scholl's, both terrifyingly
inappropriate. The pesky stigmata from that
pilgrimage still persists: two dime-sized subdermal
blisters. I wonder if they're permanent.
My soles were stained all summer too, the color
of pretty bruises. I'd jump right out of the pool
to pick blackberries barefoot. At first I worried
about snakes or scratches, but later traversed
the brambles expertly with only the dark juice
of overripe berries between my toes – dyed
to match the wine spilled on the patio after dinner.

Kid Sale

Amanda Ingram

"Okay—we're gonna be cool today," said my little brother Billy as he walked into my room one summer morning.

"Okay—so what are we gonna do?" I replied.

"Well, I'm gonna wear a glove on my right hand, and we're not gonna brush our hair. I don't know, is there anything else rocks stars do?" He asked.

"I think we should also skip brushing our teeth," I answered.

Billy was good at starting a scheme, but he never could follow through. I , however, came up with bigger, more forward-thinking plans that would make us rich and/or famous. I was the brains behind the plots, but Billy provided good company and I let him tag along, his blonde cowlick ever upright.

Summertime was when I came up with the best plans. I had all day to plan and Billy was always a willing helper. Our older brother Mike was usually "out cruising" when he was supposed to be watching us, so we were on our own a lot. Mike was a Cool Teenager who wore pegged Levis and Tretorn shoes without socks. He hung out with a group of shady but basically harmless guys who all drove VW Bugs. The only time they bothered us was when they would barge in and demand that we make them some tea. We hated they way they bossed us around but if we told, Mom and Dad would make sure Mike stayed at home all day long and then we wouldn't have any fun at all.

On summer mornings, after I realized we would be free from any supervision, I would begin planning the day's scheme. We usually began in Billy's room because it was furnished with bunk beds. I took over Billy's top bunk as my "office," and let him have the bottom bunk. The beds were arranged in an L-shape, which inspired many acrobatic stunts during our make-believe coffee breaks. Our very real Kool-Aid breaks created the modern art that was the stained carpet.

"INGRAM! Get up here now! You call this a good magazine cover for Taste of Bugs?" I hollered to Billy on the lower bunk. One of our favorite businesses was "Art Company" which colored covers for various magazines that we invented.

"Sorry Boss, do you think the excessive use of potty green is too excessive?" asked Billy, as he climbed to my office.

"Well yes it's excessive—that's what I hate about it! It's so excessive it makes me want to puke!" I declared.

Our fondness for the word "excessive" came from our dad, who found excessive. "Amanda, the peanut butter on that sandwich is a bit excessive, don't you think?" My dad would recognize and scold the slightest excess in anyone except himself. He's the type who would leave the house to buy a pop and come back four hours later with seven bottles of Diet Rite and fifteen cans of tuna. He's also the sort who wears lime green Hawaiian print shirts with giant orange sunglasses. Excess is what makes childhood beautiful, and Billy and I reveled in it. Our favorite excess was ice scream, and I often thought of new ways to get more of it.

"I've got an idea. If we sell our old Happy Meal toys and some of the purses I made

in sewing class, we'll make enough money to buy either three Mickey Mouse Pops or six Push-Pops," I said to Billy on morning.

Although this may seem like a non-dilemma, it was a very sticky situation for us. Mickey Mouse Pops are both delicious and sticky whereas Push-Pops are just sticky. Either way, we wanted as many as possible.

"Well, it's a tough call. Maybe I'll throw in my deflated basketball, you throw in your mismatched Jem and the Holograms shoes, and we can make enough to buy all the Mickey Mouse Pops we want," Billy suggested.

"Okay, let's gather up stuff and I'll make a sign to put on the mail box."

"Stuff" was something I had plenty of. Extra Lite Brite pieces? In the closet somewhere, probably underneath a pair of dress-up shoes. Hairbows with a missing clip? In the hairbows-with-a-missing-clip-that-Mom-needs-to-fix-bag. Plastic Hamburgler Happy Meal Toy? Under the night stand. Oddly enough, nothing was found under my bed because it was a day bed with a trundle. The trundle rested comfortably underneath the regular bed until it was needed for a sleepover. I would pull the bed out and raise to the height of the day bed where it would stay as long as the latch was adjusted. When friends would come over to spend the night I would pop the latch and make the bed fall unexpectedly. I always got a real charge out of it, but my friends usually called their moms to pick them up early afterwards. Anyway, my bedroom was always full of surprises and treasure. Everything I could sell was on the floor in my bedroom, under and behind furniture, usually covered with dust, and to reasonable humans was completely worthless. I was not a reasonable human, however. I was an eight-year-old who though anything and everything could be sold to a willing buyer.

I figured all we had to do was get people to stop and then the products could sell themselves.

It took both of us to carry out the table to our chosen spot, right in front of the front door. The blue table had been through so much. Dad built for me when I was two or three and it had served as home base, hiding spot, secret club, and the kids' table at Thanksgiving. The dolls and action figures sat in a pathetic lump on the left side of the table. None of them had on clothes, none had hair, and most were missing a limb or two. Years of abuse and now they were about to be sold off to another set of bratty kids. Several of Billy's action figures were misshapen as a result of too much time under the magnifying glass on hot summer days. I gave all my dolls makeovers with my mother's Mary Kay brand lipstick; I was never supposed to touch her make-up, but I figured this was important. My dolls had to look their best if they were going to sell. We used the word "Games" loosely; it's section consisted of a couple of "Connect Four" pieces and the purple head from "Hungry Hungry Hippo." "Personal Accessories" had all of our socks with no matches and some of Dad's "religious" underwear, just for laughs. Get it? It's Holy.

Our advertising consisted of a single sign. I wrote "KID SALE" on a piece of loose-leaf paper and taped it to the mailbox. The mailbox was on the street, at the bottom of the

hill, forty feet from our table. The distance between the table and the mailbox was enough so that we'd have to yell at any passers-by as we ran down the hill. The sign I made was drawn in pencil. I did this on purpose so that people would have to slow down to read it. I figured all we had to do was get people to stop and then the products would sell themselves.

We heard the sound of a car.

"HEY—STOP—WE'RE SELLING OUR STUFF—IT'S A KID SALE—WE NEED YOUR MONEY—PLEASE STOP—YOU LIKE KIDS DON'T YOU—STOP!" We jumped out of our seats and waved our arms wildly, bumping into each other as we tumbled down the hill.

"Hey, what are you kids doing?" yelled a man from his car. He was young; he had to be at least a little nice to stop. Surely he would indulge us and give us fifty cents for something.

"Hey Mister, we're selling our toys! Would you like to come and maybe buy something for your kids?" We pleaded, affecting puppy-dog eyes and pouty lips.

"Oh, maybe not today, but good luck!" His rejection startle us. Why had he even bothered to stop? Was it just to tease us—get a good look at us so he could go home to his wife and tell her about the cute little kids down the street with their cute little table?

"Dang! What's the matter with these people? I mean, this spinning Mr. Potato Head still spins if you hold it upside down!" I was really steamed.

Our plans often ended like this. We'd spend the mornings coming up with a way to make money or get on TV, execute the plan, which invariably ended a failure as we spent our valuable *DuckTales* time cleaning our mess before our parents got home from work.

"Hey kids, what'd y'all do today" our parents would ask.

"Aw, nothing," we always replied.

"I sure wish you kids would do something productive—something besides watching TV all day." Dad would say.

We would shrug our shoulders, eat our peas, and go about the nightly routine. All the while thinking, "If they only knew . . . ."

Letter from Camp

Allison Lee

To Sara:

I've returned. Two summers now
I've played on the Lookout
we called home for two weeks, or three
each July when we were
young. Our sunbathing rock
feels warm to the rough
touch of my palms, fingers
spreading on the smooth
stone. My canoe lies in wait
as I lean back, cautiously fitting
the curve of my spine into just
the right spot, wishing
you were here to cease
my solitude. Golden trees
bend to tap the surface, making
small ripples in the water that
rub our rock, like a cat.
A turtle, having had his fill of the sun,
splashes, dives into the cool
liquid, and finds a meal. Do
you remember planning a picnic
to Camp Laney? A day trip that
would take us past the Falls
to where the boys swam
and girls could spy.

It would be nice, to take
a day trip to the past.
We would glide by in our silver
boats, around the girls sporting
yellow bathing caps, their heads bobbing
above the surface, between
long rows of bright orange buoys
that separate the lanes between
the river's grassy banks. We would
pull green plastic paddles
through the water, sitting proudly

wearing oversize lifejackets as
we go drifting by in our canoes, named
Eeyore, and Pooh-stix, and one
lonely boat with its name worn off.
Today I paddled that one, using proper
J-strokes and side sweeps to take
me down the Little River
to the camp we once called home.

The Signal

Natalie Hummel

I was hunted in the second grade.
Recess had begun and the girls in
rainbow-striped blouses played
unknowingly on the swing sets.
The boys in their Izod alligators
huddled and whispered near the jungle gym,
plotting the hunt with the pack.
The stripes bounded about the plains
of the playground in complete innocence,
their wild manes blowing in the wind.
The alligators waited patiently,
watching its prey in strategic silence.
As the bell rung and the herds moved
inward toward the confinement,
the lead alligator gave the signal
and his two lieutenants attacked
a stripe that was busy amusing
her clan, not assessing her surroundings.
Pushed to the ground, she hadn't time
to protest or call for reinforcements
when the leader implemented his plan.
Wet, sloppy, quick—the alligators were gone.
The stripes managed to regroup
and aid was given to their fallen member:
handkerchiefs, Band-Aids, and cootie shots.

Holiday

George Royer

You and I prance from door to door
under the ghost moon,
as custom dictates my brother is a
grinning ghoul and I a
galloping banshee with a hopeful sack

I do attest that nights rarely taste as short
or as sweet as distant autumn evenings when
the streets became charged conduits
launching us like child shaped rockets so eager
to escape our towering benefactors and explore
the occasion like little goblins scampering
betwixt the intrusive glare of streetlights threatening
to drain the urgency of our new identities

we locusts swarm and fill our purses with the
quintessential elements of tooth decay and
aching bellies.

Multiple Options Cause Confusion, Rich Stevens

A Day at College

Jerry Hinnen

Know those lead shields dentists use to ward off X-rays? I woke yesterday with three of them on my chest.

When I dressed, I discovered some unoriginal jerk had exchanged my canvas sneakers for cement ones.

After dragging my bookbag all the way across campus, I found I'd accidentally packed cannonballs instead of my books.

When I arrived at my first class, Dr. Jolley leapt from behind the door and slugged me twice in the stomach. He then hoisted me off the floor on his shoulders and body-slammed me against the wall.

The cafeteria served large stones for lunch.

My history professor brought his new stretching rack to class, and asked politely if I could be his demonstration subject.

I was working on a paper when I developed a terrific headache. I went to the bathroom, looked in the mirror, and found I had a rhinoceros standing on my head.

For dinner, leftover stones.

While studying in the library, I heard some kids snickering behind me. I ignored them, but when I got up I realized those rascals had draped cast-iron chains all over me. Guess they've seen the Goofy-as-Marley scene from *Mickey's Christmas Carol* once too often.

My friends and I went to Waffle House for a snack and a study break, but the waffle they served me was actually a manhole cover and all they had to drink was magma.

I noticed Greg seemed to be slapping me on my back a lot while we ate; but it wasn't until after I'd had a boulder pushed over me in the campus parking lot and a refrigerator dropped on me from the sixth floor of my dorm that I found the note taped to my back. It said "Crush Me." Real funny, Greg.

It felt so good to get back to my room, at least until I saw someone had replaced my bedsheets with a thin concrete slab.

Oh well. I slept beautifully, only waking up when I floated so close to the ceiling I bumped my nose. In my dreams I had wings knitted from dandelion seeds.

Estupiñán and the Amoeba

translated from Abel Enrique Prieto's "De Estupiñán y la ameba"
by Lauren Terry

Estupiñán, hypochondriac and unhappily married, is an accountant for a company in Havana. Alienated from his coworkers and his family, he has come to focus on his latest medical horror: a gastrointestinal amoeba that becomes his rival and nemesis. He has just given up on a campaign of "Cistern Decontamination" at work, convinced that was where he was infected, after tests showed the water to be clean.

After that, his battle against the amoeba was turned into something altogether more intimate than the union, the water fountain, or the Director of the Company could play a role in. It was a silent battle, in the abysmal interiors of the man: on one side, still invisible, navigating the secret canals of his being like a queen, the amoeba; and on the other, like a diminutive and balding Ahab, Estupiñán.

Neither the cistern nor the causes were important now. His only thought was the amoeba inside him: her mechanisms of nutrition and reproduction; her sluggish step (inaudible) through the intestinal mucus, obstructing digestion, gnawing at the innocent who only sought love and happiness; the possibility she could await, cystic, the exhaustion of her adversary's munitions, only to resurge later, viscously happy, and strike a new blow; her unusual journeys in search of more propitious pastures, across the viscerae: how she lodged herself in his liver, with disastrous consequences; and what a shadowy mountaineer she was, dodging obstacles of every kind, in order to ascend to the human brain and lodge her tiny, moist body between the ideas and the dreams of her victim.

While accumulating information on his rival, Estupiñán took big orange horse pills four times a day and submitted his fecal output to a system of serial analysis. He dropped weight rapidly, and news of his matrimonial crisis began to reach us. Mercy had had a heart-to-heart with a friend from the Company and (as we had expected) the rumors soon arrived at the cafeteria to spice up our lunch conversation: Estupiñán's wife was fed up with the amoeba, because the afflicted would neither speak nor think of anything else, nor occupy himself with anything that was not—to use Mercy's words—"that filthy little vermin." According to Mercy, even their son was escaping to the street to get some fresh air every time Estupiñán—paternal and didactic—tried to warn him of amoebas and their dangers. "We almost need four ration books instead of three," Mercy had declared, with a bitter smile: "It's as if she lives with us."

Back at the Company—where Estupiñán, apart from his manias, was recognized as a serious and efficient worker—he having problems there as well. The Department Head had called his attention various times to his carelessness with the tasks that had been entrusted to him, and his distractions of coworkers with long dissertations on the amoeba. But if many of us, weary of that topic, were avoiding him, he had gained prestige in certain sectors of the Company as an expert on the misty depths of the intestinal world, its flora, and (above all) its fauna. One morning, the Department Head discovered Estupiñán advising, in his gloomy and monotonous voice, two women from other offices

that had brought their sick children to him. It was a difficult moment, because the Department Head had a soft spot for children. So he waited until the end of the consultation to pull Estupiñán aside and remind him, in presumably harsh terms, to stick to the work the Company actually needed done.

About that time Estupiñán's marriage failed. Mercy's last words, before the final slam of the door, raced through the Company along the irrepressible channels of Radio Bigmouth: "I hope the amoeba keeps you warm!"

Once he was, in truth, alone with the amoeba, Estupiñán focused his life even more on that blind hatred of the parasite that reigned inside his intestinal walls, scoffing at his big orange pills. He abandoned his conferences and consultations, in a single leap towards solitude, in renunciation of mundane glories that the Department Head took as Estupiñán's appropriate (and autocritical) response to his warnings. Some of us intuited that this was really about a much deeper process, as if the amoeba was taking Estupiñán away from us, the same way it had taken him from Mercy. He hardly spoke with anyone anymore, and if asked about anything, he responded with monosyllables. His lusterless eyes seemed to turn inward, towards the battlefield where the amoeba had the upper hand. And the Department Head began to worry anew after discovering grave errors in the monthly balance sheets that Estupiñán was turning in: "I had no idea," Estupiñán said simply, his voice duller than usual.

This introverted attitude, taciturn and administratively insupportable, was considered by the majority of us to be the by-product of a traumatic divorce. "Let him find some girl; you'll see how he perks up," we were all telling the Department Head: "The best thing for him is to take a vacation, to get away from it all—a little escape, a couple of beers…"

So Estupiñán took a vacation. He went away with an undefinable grimace and absent eyes, like the captain of a phantom ship: without precise destiny, without faith.

The last thing we heard of him came to us from the Facilitator of the Company, two days ago. He'd met Estupiñán on Saturday night, playful, content, gulping down drinks with a woman at Los Violines. It took an especial effort to imagine Estupiñán (the melancholy afflicted) in the shadows of the club, with a Ron Collins in hand and a true smile on his face, at the warm side of a woman, and music, squeezes, caresses, and another Ron Collins. It was what he should have done, what we advised him to do; but it took us by surprise. It wasn't easy to appease the astonished uproar of the group to ask the Facilitator to tell us everything, blow by blow.

The encounter had occurred in the restroom: the Facilitator went to urinate and bumped into a new and unknown Estupiñán, who reeked of rum and Fiesta cologne, arrayed in an embroidered guayabera and a species of euphoria. This Estupiñán embraced him ostentatiously and told him suddenly that he was whole again, that he was going to rebuild his life, that this time it would work out—he told him—he should come and meet her. (The Facilitator paused, and we noticed that something in his story wasn't adding up…)

"And what happened?"

"Nothing. I went with him to meet her. He introduced her."

Another pause, this time longer. We began to understand that the Facilitator was beginning to repent having brought this story back at all. But it was already too late.

Estupiñán introduced them, basically, although the Facilitator couldn't see her too well in the darkness. She seemed to be an enormous woman, fat, very pale, almost albino, and he thought that, in the end, well, to each his own…

But now he could not hide a shiver. And all of us (without even knowing why) also shivered. Defeating a strange resistance, the Facilitator spoke of her hand: he remembered that for a second, a fraction of a second, his fingers grazed a cold, soft… sticky hand.

"Then again, I had had a few drinks," he murmured.

Nobody said a word. The crowd dispersed in silence, heavily, through the corridors of the Company.

Who knows if at the bottom of hate there is affection, as the old boleros say? Who knows if it would have been better for Ahab to propose marriage to Moby Dick?

Happy American, Justin Jarvis

Gringo Soap

Lauren Terry

"Bring soap when you go,"
they told me, "for the people you meet,
their rations run out week three.
For the rest of the month
their (cold) showers lack
that and shampoo.

"Don't feed the stray dogs in the streets
or drink the water; eat the lobster,
just know it's illegal for everyone else.
(Fidel owns the cows, too;
he barbecues only for tourists.)
When they ask you for money say no,
unless they bring you menus
or towels or mints for your pillow.
You'll see Elián's father at La Roca;
as with all bathroom attendants,
tip him a dollar, no more:
It's the cushiest job in Havana."

Yes, I have come now
knowing this, still wanting
Cohibas and Havana Club
(The Official Rum of Cuba,
A Master Work in My Hands),
to mix with my Tropicana;
I have come for sterling silver bracelets,
crafted with bent spoons, for $2.99,
for T-shirts of Che saying
¡*Viva la Revolución*!,

and so I bring soap,
and invoke their names like blessings:
hotel rosettes and scented shells,
glycerine and antibacterial,
French milled and English lavender,
castile, Camay, Caress,
Safeguard, Dial, and Tone,
Irish Springs and Summer Rain,

Ivory always to float
in the pollution of your bay,
my Tide to clean yours—
I want to bring you
this Palmolive branch, this Dove—
I want to bring you Zest! Cheer! Joy!

and throw open the windows
of the Guitart Havana Hilton
to stand there like a gringa Evita and shout:
"I have all the soap you need!"

Daisies

Robin Mozer

She is in Barnes and Noble browsing new fiction titles when she hears him.

"Hazel?"

He is still tall, still dark, and still has all of his hair, which is more than she can say for Eugene. He obviously still remembers her. Perhaps he still sees Hazel, the 20-something graduate student.

She had been feeling old. Stronger corrective lenses and gray at the temples old. Middle-aged old. Soft, squishy, frumpy old.

Hazel, the 30-something housewife, smiles and tucks a piece of hair behind her ear with her left hand.

"Here's my number Hazel, just in case." He slips a business card into the back pocket of her jeans.

She slips it out to look at it on the way to the parking lot. *M.D. University Hospital.* She slips it into her purse and sits it beside her on the seat of the old truck.

She doesn't feel frumpy as she drives home—she doesn't feel old.

Hazel lets herself into the house and walks straight to the kitchen. She puts her purse on the table. She picks up the phone. She pulls the number from the side pocket of the purse and then she notices.

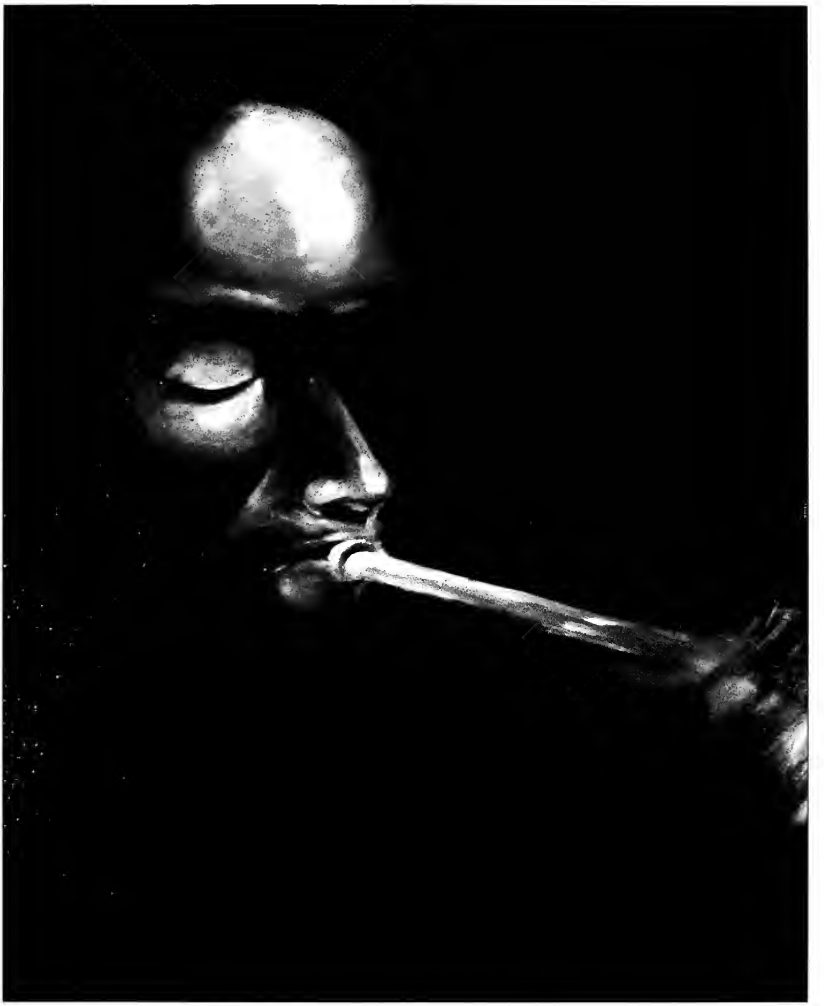
Three of Mrs. McCormick's prize Gerber daisies stand in the middle of the kitchen table, pink, yellow, and orange.

She puts the phone down.

Their stems are fat and distorted through the glass of the Mason jar they are standing in. Clippings litter the floor. Water puddles next to the jar on the table. A scrap of brown paper sack is taped to the jar—Eugene has drawn a clumsy heart.

Hazel bends to gather the clippings on the floor, opens the trashcan, and throws away the business card folded in her left hand.

She doesn't feel frumpy as she ties on her apron and starts supper—she doesn't feel old.



Blue, James McGriff

Interstate 20

McCharen Pratt

You rise out of bed,
shake your head,
and stars fall
from your hair,
grazing the sheets
where you dream of me.

Highway fields,
mudded by rain and plow
steam away the dew
and frost crusted over
my windshield.
The crushed lapis sky
fades under
daybreak's pink palms.
Speeding home over black roads,
I grin like the moon sliver
dangling
in my rearview mirror
and look for morning stars
you promised to hang:
look closely, you whispered,
they spell love.

Seven a.m.
Dying coals spill
across the sky
while stars fall
cool,
burning,
to the pavement
and melt.

In Memory of John Strohl

David Ullrich

I

Nobody's fool, he wore motley—
psilocybin shirts blooming
light-hearted and lewd
in a GAP and polyester landscape.

He planted color, loved the abracadabra of rain,
the voluptuous pigmentations sprouting like dreams.
He witnessed the spider's sophistry,
the Pitcher plant's bitter lessons

as only a naturalist or a god bears witness.
His hands never grumbled, and the heft of mud
hung like a good laugh in the air between us.
Planting, cullings, stinking

ginkgo fruit ripened his shoes.
Glass houses, seed swappings, lily-ponds.
Nymphaea odorata. Cereus gigantea.
"Anything worth doing well is worth doing to excess."

II

Kindness became his field of study, his expertise,
kindness and stoichiometric titrations:

"weighs unknown substances with the patience of a father,
weighs each word of his troubled son or daughter."

John could precipitate that most elusive compound
by adding to a gravimetric wash the prodigal reagent.

He lived the spectrochemist's creed: a sensitivity
to one unknown part in 10 million particles.

III

When his body seized, it seized us all,
and chained each world to a stunned repose.

Eden's womb is hollowed out by death, again;
death and its bitter perennials trowel down and root.

So many die in someone's name,
on dulled wood, in mass graves, forsaken. In your

furnace, only pottery and holy ash.
Gardeners, potters, and chemists know

water retains what it might give
as casually as it takes away.

IV

Bright jewel locked in permafrost.
Mercury, swift wanderer, lost—
a stone across a dark star tossed.
Talaria, caduceus, dross.

Earth rolls beneath her weight
all who cannot bear its freight.
This man stood against despair and hate.
Clay to ash to gold I pray—and wait.